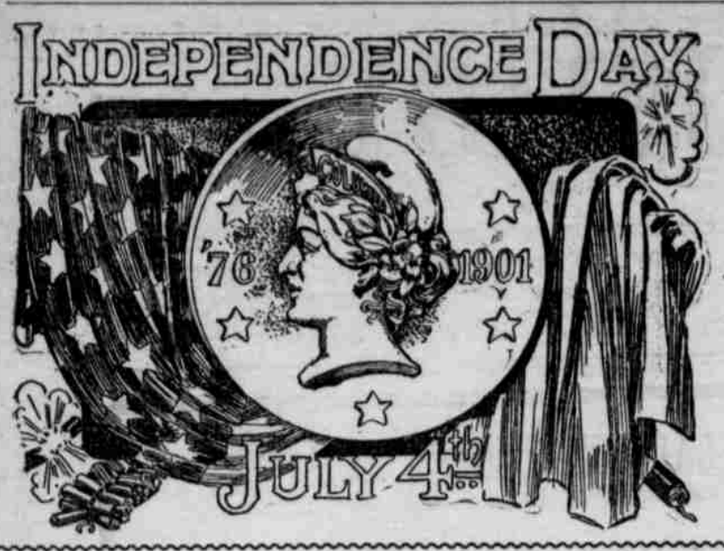

The Best of It

A Juvenile Sketch for Independence Day

The Crosspatch Man was sick again, and this time it must be pretty bad, for all the morning Meredith had been watching the servants spread straw before the house and muffle the big, shiny doorbell.

"Poor man!" mamma said, pitingly. "He is sick so often!"

"But he's a Crosspatch Man!" muttered Meredith stiffly. Then he repented and looked as shamefaced as a very little boy with a very round, dimpled face could look. "I'm so sorry he's ve-ry sick," he said slowly. "I s'pose it hurts even Crosspatch Men."

Mamma did not notice. She was having her little noon "gossip" with papa, and they were still talking about their invalid neighbor.

"It isn't quite so bad as it seems, you know," papa was saying. "He always has the straw laid down and things muffled when he has one of his worse nervous attacks. It doesn't mean all that it does in most cases. He is terribly afflicted by noise at almost any time.'

"Noise! I should think so!" That was from Meredith, who pricked up his ears at the word. Didn't he know how the Crosspatch Man felt 'bout a noise? Didn't he belong to the Rudd Street Second? Wasn't he captain? And oh, my, the times he'd seen the Crosspatch Man a-scowling and a-fuming when they marched past his window!

"But Fourth of July will be a terrible day to him—poor man!" went on mamma's gentle voice. That made Meredith start a little. He had been thinking about Fourth o' July, too. (Did he think of much of anything else nowadays?) He had been going over in his mind all the glorious program of the day. For the Rudd Street Second was going to celebrate in a worthy manner. They were going to even outdo themselves this year—and hadn't they had the proud honor of being the noisest street in the city for two Fourth o' Julys a-running? Let 'em just wait till they heard this Fourth o' July!

It was three days off. That would give the Crosspatch Man time to have the straw taken up and the bell unmuffled, for his worst "times" never lasted more than two or three days.

"Then he'll have to cotton up his ears," mused Meredith, philosophically, watching the big foreign servant that wore a turban go back and forth past the Crosspatch Man's window. The house Meredith lived in and the Crosspatch Man's house were quite close together, so it was easy to watch things.

Unfortunately for an invalid with

MEREDITH STOOD IN SHEER AMAZEMENT.

the terrible affliction called "nerves," Rudd Street was a regular nest of boys. They were boys everywhere on it. You ran against boys when you went east, and boys ran against you when you went west. Boys sprang up in the most unexpected places. The houses seemed to be running over with boys. And really, there was at least one boy—and on an average two or three—in every house on Meredith's side, except in the Crosspatch Man's house. Oh, dear me, no, there weren't any boys there!

On the other side of the street you had to skip the "middlest" house and Miss Quilhot and Miss Eromathea's—oh, yes, and the minister's house, of which Miss Quilhot and Miss Eromathea were old maids, and the minister—oh, no, he wasn't an old maid, but you couldn't expect him to have boys in the house, for how could he ever write his sermons?

So it was, as I said, an unfortunate street to have "nerves" on. And the Crosspatch Man had so many!

The three days between soon went away, and it was the night—the very night—before it! There were only a few hours more, for, of course, you didn't have to wait till the sun rose on Fourth of July.

Meredith had drilled the Rudd Street Second for the last time and dispersed his men. He was on his way home to supper. Going by the

HE MADE A LITTLE SPEECH.

Crosspatch Man's house, he heard voices distinctly issuing from an open window. He couldn't help hearing, it was so quiet in the street. Perhaps it was the "lull before the storm."

"The sahib cannot bear it," a gentle soothing voice was saying, but Meredith recognized the indignation mixed with the pity in it. "The sahib will be again sick."

Then came Meredith's astonishment, for the Crosspatch Man's voice was answering, and it was quite calm and gentle; and it said:

"Of course I shall be sick again, Hari! I've made all my plans to perish. But what can you expect? The little chaps must have their Fourth o' July. I was a little chap myself—once. Shut the window, Hari. There's a suspicion of a draught."

Meredith stood still in sheer amazement, and watched the turban-man close the window. He was a little chap himself once, the Crosspatch Man was! And how kind his voice had sounded, too. It made him sorry for the crasspatch Man—sorrier than he had ever been before.

"He's a-dreadin' it like sixty. He's 'spectin' to perish," Meredith said aloud. "It's goin' to make him sick, of course—that's what he said to the turban-man. An' he was a little chap once, an' his voice was kind an' tired out."

Then Meredith went home and perched himself up on the banister post in the hall, to think. That was where he always thought things—big things, you know. This was, oh my, such a big thing!

"I'm cap'n,' mused Meredith, knitting his little fair brows. "I can say, 'Go, an' thou ghost,' like the man in the Bible; but they'll be dreadful dis'pointed, the Rudd Street Seconds will be. Still—well, he sick an' he had a kind spot in his voice, an' he used to be a little chap too, so of course he used to bang things an' make noises. I don't think he sounded much like a Crosspatch Man."

In a little while, after a little more tough thinking, Meredith slipped down and out of the door, up the street. He got together the Rudd Street Seconds and made a little speech, as a captain may, to his men.

The next day the city and all America celebrated Fourth o' July, and Rudd Street was famous again, but this time for being the very quietest street in all the city! There were just as many boys in it, too, as ever.

The Crosspatch Man's white, nervous face smoothed and calmed as the day wore on, and at last it actually smiled in a gentle way, as if he was thinking about something pleasant.

And the captain of the Rudd Street Seconds and his brave men, drilling and popping and banging in a distant street, were happy, too.—Annie Hamilton Donnell.

Mildred Trevanion

BY THE DUCHESS.

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

"You should not hit a man when he is down," he said, reproachfully.

"I don't think you will be long down," returned Blount with an encouraging nod that somehow made Denzil's heart beat high, though he did not dare to take the words in their under meaning. "And now I must be off. No, thank you, my dear—I can not stay to dinner; I have so many things to attend to before seven. But tell Sir George I will look him up again in the morning. And give my love to the girls; and tell Mildred that I know, and she knows, there is but one man in the world can ever make her happy."

He looked kindly at Denzil as he spoke, but the latter would not accept the insinuation conveyed in his words. Mrs. Younge, however, noticed both the glance and the significant tone, and a light broke in upon her.

When Lady Caroline had followed Dick Blount out of the room she went over and knelt down by her son.

"Denzil," she said, lovingly, "I know it all now. But am I never to speak of it?"

And he answered as he kissed her: "Do not let us ever mention it again—there's a darling mother."

But all that night Mrs. Younge gazed at the girl and wondered, pondering many things and blaming, woman-like, yet feeling in her heart the while that the choice her son had made was indeed a perfect one.

After this Denzil made rapid strides toward recovery, growing stronger, gayer and more like the Denzil they had known in the first days of their acquaintance than he had been for some time before his illness. He could now walk from room to room and take long drives, though Stubber still insisted on some hours in the day being spent on the sofa. Miss Trevanion Denzil saw daily, though seldom alone—and who shall say how much this conducted toward the renewing of his strength?

It wanted but a fortnight of Charlie's wedding day, and Denzil, who was feeling a little tired, and was anxious to attain perfect health before the event came off—having promised to attend in the character of "best man"—was lying on the lounge in the library when Mildred came in.

"I did not know you were in from your drive," she said. There was less constraint between them now than there had ever been. "Did you enjoy it?"

"Very much indeed."

"So you ought," she said. "Could there be a more beautiful day?" She threw up the low window as she spoke and leaned out. "The air reminds me of summer, and the flowers are becoming quite plentiful, instead of being sought longingly one by one."

"Yes," returned Denzil, vaguely, thinking all the time what an exquisite picture she made, framed in by the window and its wreaths of hanging ivy.

"By the bye, did you like the bunch I gathered for you this morning? See—there they are over there."

"Were they for me?" asked Denzil, looking pleased. "I did not flatter myself that they were."

"Well, yes, I think they were chiefly meant for you," returned Mildred, carelessly. "Invalids are supposed to get every choice thing going—are they not?—though indeed you can scarcely come under that head now."

She threw down the window again, and came back toward the center of the room.

"Mildred," said Denzil suddenly—he had risen on her first entering, and stood leaning against the chimney-piece—"there is something connected with my illness, a dream it must have been, that, whenever I see you, preys upon my mind. May I tell it to you? The vivid impression it made might perhaps leave me if I did."

"Of course you may," answered Mildred, growing a shade paler.

"Come over here then and sit down, I can not speak to you so far away."

She approached the hearth rug and stood there.

"I will warm my hands while you tell me," she said, determined that, should it prove to be what she half-dreaded to hear, he should not see her face during the recital.

"Well, then," he began, "I thought that, as I lay in bed one evening, the door opened, and you came into the room, and, walking softly over to my bedside, stood there very sorrowfully looking down upon me. We were alone, I think"—passing his hand in a puzzled manner over his forehead, as though endeavoring vainly to recollect something—"at least I can remember no one else but us two, and it seemed to me that presently you began to cry and stooped over me, whispering something, I forget what, and I took your hands like this"—suiting the action to the word—"and then some figures came toward us, but I waved them back, holding you tightly all the time; and"—here he paused, his eyes fixed earnestly upon the opposite wall, as though there he saw reacting all that was struggling for clearness in his brain—"and I asked you to do something for me then—something that would aid my recovery more than all the doctor's stuff—and you——"

"No, no, I did not!" cried Mildred, vehemently, unable longer to restrain her fear of his next words, and trying passionately to withdraw her hands.

"Yes, you did!" exclaimed Denzil, excitedly; "I know it now. It was not fancy—how could I ever think it was?—it was reality. Oh, Mildred, you kissed me."

"How dare you?" cried Miss Trevanion, bursting into tears. "You know I did not; it is untrue—a fevered dream—anything but the truth."

"Do you say that?" he said, releasing her. "Of course, then, it was mere imagination. Forgive me; I should not have said it, but the remembrance of it haunts me night and day. This room, too, fosters all memories. Here for the first time I told you how I loved you; and here, too, you refused me, letting me see how wild and unfounded had been my hope that you also loved me in return. Do you remember?"

"Yes, yes, I remember," Mildred answered, faintly, turning her face away.

"Over there"—pointing to a distant couch—"we met again, after weeks of separation and oblivion—since you say that past thought of mine was but a dream—and I felt when you entered the room how undying a thing is love. You see this place is fraught with pain to me, and yet I like it. I like to sit here and think, and picture to myself those old scenes again, only giving them a kindlier ending."

"Do you still care to recall them?" she asked in a low, broken voice.

"I shall always care to recall anything connected with you," he answered, simply; then—"Did I ever thank you, Mildred, for coming to my assistance on that last hunting day? I think not. I have no recollection of all that occurred, but they told me how good to me you were."

"It was the very commonest humanity," she said.

"Of course that was all. You would have done the same for anyone. I know that. Still I am grateful to you." Then suddenly, "Why did you break off with Lyndon?"

"You have asked me that question before," she said.

"I know I have, and I know also how rude a question it is to ask; and still I cannot help wishing to learn the answer. Will you tell me?"

She hesitated and then said, slowly: "He discovered, or fancied, that I did not care sufficiently for him; and he was too honorable to marry a woman who did not accept him willingly of her own accord."

"When did he make that discovery?"

"We ended our engagement the evening of your accident," she answered, evasively, and with evident reluctance.

"Mildred, if I thought," he began, passionately, trying to read her face, "if I dared to believe what your words appear to imply I might be mad enough again to say to you words that have ever fallen coldly on your ear. I would again confess how fondly I love you—how faithfully during all these wretched months I have clung to the sweet memories of you that ever linger in my heart."

She shrunk away a little and covered her face with her hands.

"Do you still turn from me, Mildred? Am I distressing you? Darling, I will say no more. It is indeed for the last time in all my life that I have now spoken. Forgive me, Mildred; I am less than a man to pain you in this way; but, oh, my dearest, do not shrink from me, whatever you do; do not let me think I have taught you to hate me by my persistence. See, I am going, and for the future do not be afraid that I shall ever again allude to this subject." He drew near her and gently kissed her hair. "Good-by," he said, once more, and then, slowly almost feebly, walked down the room toward the door.

Miss Trevanion stood gazing after him, her blue eyes large and bright with fear; she had an intense longing to say she knew not what. Oh, for words to express all that was in her heart!

Her hands were closely clasped together; her lips, pale and still, refused to move. It was the last time—he had said so; if she let him go now it was a parting that must be forever; and yet she could not speak. Her love, her life was going, and she could not utter the word that would recall him. Already he had turned the handle of the door; the last moment had indeed come—would he not turn?

"Denzil!" she cried, desperately, breaking down by one passionate effort the barrier that had stood so long between them, and held out her hands to him.

"My love!" he said, turning. And then in another moment she was in his arms and all the world was forgotten.

(The End.)

A Good Cook.

To be a good cook means the knowledge of all fruits, herbs, balms and spices, and of all that is healing and sweet in the fields and groves, and savory in meats. It means carefulness, inventiveness, watchfulness, willingness and readiness of appliance. It means the economy of our great-grandmothers and the science of modern chemists. It means much tasting and no wasting. It means English thoroughness, French art, and Arabian hospitality. It means, in fine, that you are to be perfectly and always ladies (loafgivers), and are to see that everybody has something nice to eat.—Ruskin.

The Hon. Joel R. Poinsett, a native of South Carolina, and one of her most gifted sons, during the latter part of the administration of John Quincy Adams, it will be remembered, represented the United States at the capital of Mexico, which was then much distracted by internal dissensions. While Mr. Poinsett resided there, the city was captured by one of the contending factions, and he and his family incurred no small degree of personal danger from the violence of the soldiers, by whom they were suspected of affording concealment to certain obnoxious individuals. In the height of the nullification controversy after his return, in an address delivered to the people of Charleston, the following eloquent passage occurs:

"Wherever I have been, I have been proud of being a citizen of this great republic, and, in the remotest corners of the earth, have walked erect and secure under that banner which our opponents would tear down and trample under foot. I was in Mexico when that city was taken by assault. The house of the American ambassador was then, as it ought to be, the refuge of the distressed and persecuted; it was pointed out to the infuriated soldiers as a place filled with their enemies. They rushed to the attack. My only defense was the flag of my country, and it was flung out at the instant that hundreds of muskets were leveled at us. Mr. Mason and myself placed ourselves beneath its waving folds. We did not blench, for we felt strong in the protecting arm of this mighty republic. We told them that the flag that waved over us was the banner of that nation to whose example they owed their liberty, and to whose protection they were indebted for their safety. The scene changed as by enchantment, and the men who were on the point of attacking my house and menacing the inhabitants, cheered the flag of this country, and placed sentinels to protect it from outrage. Fellow-citizens, in such a moment as that, would it have been any protection to me and mine to have proclaimed myself a Carolinian? Should I have been here to tell you this tale, if I had hung out the Palmetto and the single star? Be assured that to be respected abroad, we must maintain our place in the Union!"

His First Firecracker.

I.

II.

III.

Over thirty-five thousand persons in Illinois belong to associations interested in preserving and fostering the birds of the state.

CANADA'S NEW CURRENCY.

Dominion's New $4 Bill a Masterpiece of Engraver's Skill.

The new $4 bill issued by the Dominion of Canada promises to become popular, for artistically it is a masterpiece of the engraver's skill. On its face it bears a flattering picture of the lock on the canal at Sault Ste. Marie, an engineering work purely American. This vignette is regarded as a delicate compliment to the United States. A Canadian paper, commenting on the circumstance, asks: "Who would travel by the Canadian canal after the Canadian government gave such a certificate as to the superiority of the American lock? It is true, our own canal is a grand work, one of the wonedrs of engineering science, but the government fancies the one on the other side of the river more. As these $4 notes pass from hand to hand the wistful gaze of those who part with them will rest on the American lock—the gateway through which the government would direct their travels. Since they came into office the Canadian ministers have tried to forget their old disparaging language about our canals, and have lately spoken very favorably of these. But money talks. A picture of our Sault canal or of some other great Canadian work or scene should occupy the place given up to the American canal. This foreign canal lock depicted on our $4 bill is a humiliation to us. That picture is a record of blundering or something worse that will never be forgotten. Specimens of these $4 bills will be preserved wherever there is a collection of monetary curiosities. The people of Sault Ste. Marie are deeply offended at the government for its selection of the American canal as the object most worthy of depiction."

Fatal Duel Near Berlin.

Hans Wagner, a member of the staff of the Berlin Tageblatt, was mortally wounded in a duel with swords by an anti-Semite journalist. The quarrel arose over a political dispute on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue to Prince Bismarck last Sunday.

The fewer steps a man takes the longer his shoes last.

The commonest grub looks good when a fellow can't eat.

Too many ancestors have spoiled many a good man.

Most people have the church instinct in their blood.

Long Live the King! The King is Wizard Oil; pain his enemies, whom he conquers.

Lazy men are like theories. They seldom work.

Why is it girls have such an appetite for operas and ice cream?